

MCC nursing instructor focuses on

application of skills

By Shanika P. Carter

“Culminating the art of care and compassion through the synergy of mind, body, and spirit” is Syreeta Drake’s nursing philosophy. Becoming newly tenured in January as a full-time nursing instructor at Montcalm Community College, Drake added that, “Skills can be taught, but caring and compassion, not so much.”

This is why Drake’s focus as an instructor is making sure her students can put into practice and apply what they learn, giving them a certain foundational knowledge to succeed.

Beginning as an adjunct instructor in 2019, and then becoming a part of the full-time Nursing Faculty later that year, Drake said that she “took the scenic route” when referencing her own educational journey.

Drake said she always wanted to teach, but it was after caring for her late mother through a traumatic experience and witnessing other nurses in action that she decided to pursue an education in nursing.

She enrolled in and completed the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), and after six years working as an LPN, she returned to school to complete her Associate of Nursing degree. While continuing to work, she went on to complete an online Bachelor of Nursing degree at Western Governors University, as well as a Master of Science in Nursing Education.

It was at this point that Drake realized the significance and impact that nurses have in teaching, which became her focus.

“Particularly in something like nursing, you can give people the benefit of all your wisdom, if they’re willing to listen and they’re not too hung up on who the information is coming from,” she said. “You can really impact lives.”

Drake said she appreciates the culture at MCC where she has close relationships with her students and is able to support their learning needs.

The married mother of a son and daughter, Drake feels it is rewarding to see the “light bulbs” come on in her students after they have been challenged and she has helped them to translate knowledge into critical thinking and safe application that creates a competent and compassionate nurse.

Currently completing a Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program so she can serve the community in a greater capacity, Drake encourages those considering nursing to remember that they already have two precious resources to succeed – time and energy.

Drake encourages students not to get discouraged by wait lists for nursing programs, and advises those interested in the field to always be in nurse mode, assessing situations and environments they are in and getting in the mindset and thought process of being a nurse.

An active member of several nursing organizations, including the Grand Rapids Black Nurses Association and the American Psychiatric Nurses Association, Drake is also an esthetician and a published author, working on her second book.

Wearing many hats, Drake continues to show compassion to those she reaches and instill a sense of compassion in those that she teaches. ■

